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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to measure community and student perceptions regarding College of the Mainland (COM). A survey of the literature provides background on sociopolitical forces in the community, the distribution of power and influence in the community, the relationship of the community to the larger society, the relationship of the community to the two-year school, and COM's relationship to its community. A questionnaire was administered to two populations, one consisting of COM sophomores, and the other consisting of high school seniors in the COM district who intend to enroll at some institution of higher education, but not necessarily COM. The high school senior group was expected to reflect the perceptions of the community. Total usable responses from each group numbered 53. The perceptions measured were: (1) COM has a black enrollment which is greater than the community; (2) COM is an institution with a liberal philosophy and a faculty of almost universally liberal opinion; (3) COM is opposed to religion and possibly atheistic in its philosophy; (4) COM is primarily a trade school; (5) COM is excessively easy in its instructional programs thus making them of doubtful quality. The existence of all five perceptions were confirmed in both populations to varying degrees. No significant difference was found between populations. Recommendations for improving the college-community relationship are made. (AH)

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A STUDY OF COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND AND ITS COMMUNITY: RELATIONSHIPS AND PERCEPTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

The primary charge for the two-year college is that it must be related to the community it serves. This study surveys:

1. the sociopolitical forces typically operating in communities
2. how power and influence are distributed in the community
3. the relationship of the community to the larger society
4. the relationship of the community to the two-year college
5. the relationship of College of the Mainland (COM) to its community

A questionnaire was administered to two populations, COM sophomores and members of the COM community. The existence of five perceptions having to do with the college's religious orientation, sociopolitical philosophy, and educational quality was tested. The presence of all five perceptions was confirmed in both populations to varying degrees. There was no significant difference found between populations. Recommendations for improving the college-community relationship were made.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The comprehensive community college's success depends solely on its servicing the needs of its public. That statement, in a few words, describes the primary difference between the community college and the traditional institution of higher education. Ideally, the community college is a center for the educational development of all citizens of the community. Harlacher speaks of it as

> The kind of education that will increase and improve citizen participation in decision-making, that will lead to the enrichment of community living, that will release the full power of a society rooted in respect for human dignity, and the sanctity of a human personality (Harlacher, 1969).

The community college is a potential leader in the development of systems for improving the quality of American life (Gleazer, 1974). Blocker (1965) states that if a two-year college is to be truly community-oriented, it must continually interact with its environment. It must be sensitive and responsive to the needs and attitudes of the community.

Such a college cannot avoid having a public image because it is highly visible in the community. The public image of an institution can help or hinder a college's ability to meet community needs. According to one source:

> Misunderstandings or misinterpretation of the functions and needs of the instititions by one or more [community] groups can create dislocations in college programs and policies that complicate the whole course of institutional development (Blocker, 1965).

The image will involve a variety of characteristics. Who does not attend? What is the quality of the school? What kind of people work at the college? It is a good or bad place for my son or daughter? What things does it do well, or poorly? How does it spend my tax money? Answers to these questions comprise an inevitable emerging image of the college in the public.

The public image of the college is established through two main systems. One is the formal system. Press releases, campus visits, college programs, former students, and contact with staff members name a few.

A second, and possibly more potent system is the community's informal social and power structure. Hunter describes power as

> a word that will be used to describe the acts of men going about the business of moving other men to act in relation to themselves or in relation to organic or inorganic things (Kimbrough, 1969).

Kimbrough believes that power accrues from control and use of resources. Resources which he mentions are friendship ties, a favorable position in interaction patterns, official positions in the formal structure, social status, wealth, and family ties. These informal leaders and controllers of power are the policy makers of the community. They appoint those who are like them in behavior, leadership style, and ideology to carry out selected missions. Because the community college is an integral part of the social and political system, it is greatly influenced by this informal structure.

The purpose of this study is to determine attitudes toward College of the Mainland (COM); these attitudes may have been communicated through either the formal or informal structures just discussed. The study will determine the degree to which five perceptions may, or

not, be established in the community and in the graduates of the college. The five perceptions are:

1. COM has a black enrollment which is greater than the community
2. COM is an institution with a liberal philosophy and a faculty of almost universally liberal opinion.
3. COM is opposed to religion and possibly atheistic in its philosophy.
4. COM is primarily a trade school.
5. COM is excessively easy in its instructional programs thus making them of doubtful quality.

The study does not try to determine the validity of the statements; rather, it attempts to determine whether or not the statements are perceived.

A community is a complex phenomenon in that it is a mixture of many kinds of people who have different philosophies. It is important to look at the primary dynamic of a community.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Community Power Structure Theory

It would be appropriate to ask several questions about community dynamics ; namely, what sociopolitical forces typically operate within communities? How is the power and influence distributed in the community? What is the relationship of the community to the larger society, and what is the relationship of the community to the two-year college? All of the answers to the above are germane to the generation and quality of attitudes concerning the college.

Sociopolitical forces. Having an intellectual commitment is a fundamental requirement of men in power. These people, whether powerful in the formal or informal structure, have many convictions. Leaders view individual issues from their total set of operational beliefs. (See Appendix I) They have definite ideas about what kind of community they want; they are sure of what kinds of schools will serve their community; they also have firm expectations regarding the behavior of school personnel (Nunnery, 1971). Decisions and policies they effect form a congruent ideological system. A critical problem is created, states Kimbrough (1964), when the ideologies of the influential of the community differ from those of the educational administrators. Educational leaders can't violate critical norms of the community leaders and still be accepted as power-holders in the informal structure.

Most informal groups have a certain harmony of outlook among

their members. This harmony develops from the rewards of shared values and norms as well as the group's norm-enforcing activities. Another contributing factor is the frequent and functional interaction among influentials. Nunnery describes this interaction well.

> Interaction among influentials, leaders, and followers of a power group are frequent and functional. For example, many of the influentials may belong to the same country club or attend the same church. They give a great deal of thought to community living and frequently discuss business and social conditions. In communities that have fairly stable populations this exchange of ideas results in the development of norms and ideas about community living (Nunnery, 1971).

Instead of standing apart, educational leaders must be a part of the process of norm-setting. By doing so, they can interject concepts into long-range community planning that will promote quality education.

In The Two-year College: A Social Synthesis, authors Blocker, Plummer, and Richardson write, "Each perception of the college is the product of values and needs of the individual or group at a particular point in time (Blocker, 1965). Therefore, a conservative may express the positive attitude that the two-year school is weeding out "incompetence." A radical may have the attitude that the school is not changing the local social order rapidly enough.

Blocker, et. al., identify the spectrum of sociopolitical forces of the community as "reactionary, conservative, liberal, and radical" (See Appendix 2). It is not difficult to predict the complications that would arise, for instance, from having a liberal-radical faculty and staff in a conservative-reactionary community. In such a situation, it would be highly improbable that the college would serve the public's needs.

Colleges are very sensitive to political issues. For instance,

most two-year colleges in the Ontario Continuing Education Association have chosen to stay out of community development; yet

> ...one college indicated that it was trying to think through the implications of adopting a community development approach. Its concern was that if people begin to analyze their communities, they might want to bring about social change. Such developments could have political repercussions for the college which basically sees itself as a-political (Ontario Association for Continuing Education, 1970).

These schools are apparently very aware of the sociopolitical positions in their communities.

There has been no comprehensive study of this college district (Mainland Galveston County, Texas) to determine the strengths of each of the sociopolitical positions; this is an important fact. General feelings on the part of the faculty and staff are, however, that the community has members from all parts of the political spectrum, with more strength on the conservative-reactionary side.

Typologies of community power and community analysis. If two-year colleges must consider the different kinds of political positions, or attitudes, in the community, they must also consider the ways in which each sector distributes its influence. The analytical description of the influence or power is known as the typology.

There are two basic typologies which address themselves to the question of exercise of power and influence. The single elite model views power as concentrated in the hands of a few people. The same influentials make key decisions in all significant areas; they are subject to very little influence from the masses. Elites acquire their power from roles or positions within the socioeconomic system. They are usually financial or industrial leaders.

According to Hunter, power elites disagree from time to time but share a consensus about preserving the status quo. Their socio-political base is usually conservative; very effectively they defend the existing system from outside threat. The power structure is held together by common interests, mutual obligations, money, habit, delegated responsibility, and, in some cases, by coercion. Hunter's thesis is that the top power structure concerns itself only with major policy and ideology. From those cues, the formal leadership of economic, governmental, religious, educational, civic, and cultural institutions communicates and implements policies decided by the elites. The reason, says Hunter, for this subordination is that most institutions mentioned above are financially dependent upon economic institutional sources. The leaders of these institutions, therefore, succumb to the interests of the policymakers who operate in the economic sphere of community life (Dye, 1972).

A second widely-discussed typology is that of pluralism. The theory of pluralism states that leadership is fluid, mobile, and dependent upon a particular decision or issue. Access to decision-making is achieved through an individual's acquiring skills of leadership: organization, information, activity, interest, and skill in public relations. According to this theory, there are many elite groups within a society or community. A group of influentials may exercise power in some decisions, but not in others. No single group dominates in all issue areas.

Power relationships in a pluralistic society do not necessarily remain static. A set of power relationships may be functional for a

particular decision or issue but detiorate as the issue loses importance. Similarly, influentials do not necessarily retain power over long periods. Individuals move in and out of top positions, again depending upon the nature of the decision. In a pluralistic elite society, masses exercise considerable influence over elites through elections and memberships in organizations. Competition among elites holds them accountable to the masses for decisions effected and allows fluidity. At the same time, the total number of people involved in decision-making represent only a small percentage of the total community. Dahl, in his study of New Haven, found influentials to be of higher social status than the rest of the community and to possess more leadership skills (Dye, 1972).

Kimbrough's studies in Florida described influence using four typologies which are a refinement of the two described above:

1. Monopolistic - Hunter's single power elite model
2. Pluralistic - where many groups bargain for the purpose of maintaining self-centered interest and individual control over segmented public functions
3. Multi-group, non-competitive - a pluralistic model in which the elites are non-competitive
4. Competitive elites - a pluralistic model in which the elites vie for power (Sress, 1971).

Application of community power and community analysis. If these theories of power and influence are valid, then educators must acquire the skill of analyzing the community. The need to look at whom the college serves is a predominant theme as the following students suggest:

> More attention needs to be paid to special publics within the population of the areas served by the colleges...Colleges [need] to identify the various sub-groups within their areas (Ontario Association for Continuing Education, 1970).

and,

> A school's leadership should subject the area it serves to a "community analysis" for the purpose not only of developing strategies but, more importantly to assist in developing a more adequate school-community relations program (Hughes, 1972).

Kimbrough (1964), believes that educational leaders traditionally hold low power positions in the community structure. Generally, they are unaware of the workings of the power structure; they do not understand that they were selected to carry out educational policies determined by those outside the educational institution. In Political Power and Educational Decision-Making, (1964), Kimbrough asserts that most professional educators still rely on the institutional-association concept; they believe that policies and decisions are made within formal structures of government and community organizations. Such a misconception, according to Kimbrough, accounts for greatly needed advances in education which are still unaccomplished. Educators, Kimbrough asserts, must become students of typologies of influence and power in the community. Further, they must assume no set attitudes about control of decision-making in the absence of data or observation (Kimbrough, 1964). Harlacher observes that

> Too often we take the attitude that the college knows best what the people need. This attitude, unfortunately, precludes either identifying the community's needs and interests or attempting to meet and fulfill them. And, in some instances, this is justified on the ground that "the people don't know what's good for them" (Harlacher, 1971).

There seem to be a few instances in which educato s have heeded this advice. Some colleges use community attitude sur.eys to test the soundness of planning for elections. For instance, West Valley Junior College employed Roper and Associates to determire the community's

1. attitude toward the importance of a college education,
2. college plans for their children, and
3. voting intentions on the upcoming bond issue.

A questionnaire was given to 750 adults through door-to-door interviews. Even though 75% of those interviewed were in favor of the proposed bond election, the consultants recommended that the election be postponed. Those familiar with the college were found to be more likely to favor the election and to vote; it was recommended that an educational campaign about the college be carried out prior to submitting the bond issue. There was good community support found for the college, so the success of such a campaign seemed likely (Roper, 1968).

In another instance Cerritos College in California undertook a two-part survey in cooperation with a citizen's advisory committee. The committee is composed of city managers, chamber of commerce managers, school superintendents, and coordinating council presidents from the college district communities. Part 1 of the survey was a socio-economic study of the district. Part 2 was an opinion poll with special questions for the several communities of the district (Harlacher, 1971).

Some other colleges have attempted a scientific sample of their community's attitude toward the goals and programs of the college. Moraine Valley Community College found a favorable response from citizens (Office of Research, 1969). Hewitt and Doyle (1969) also report positive if inconsistent attitudes. In the latter case, even though the citizens believed the college contributed toward the welfare of the community, technical-vocational education was not supported. Murdoff (1967) tried to find an answer to the question: "What does the local

community understand of the local junior college and its functions?" A Macomb County Community College project tried to determine the effect of mass circulation of the student newspaper on opinion about the college (Megerson, 1967). Florida College did a man-in-the-street survey of the public's reaction to the college's community services program and to the college in general. The reactions were so revealing that a revision of the community services program was made (Harlacher, 1971). Further review of the literature indicates that most institutions do not follow the advice of Kimbrough and Harlacher. There is all too little formal analysis of community power, attitudes, and knowledge.

To this point, the writers have attempted to show that a variety of sociopolitical opinions exist in the community, that these opinions are organized in various ways, and that educators should continually analyze to discover the source and influence of attitudes. There are, however, pervasive societal trends which must be considered for each community.

Societal trends. Blocker, Plummer, and Richardson identify three societal trends:

1. rapid growth
2. technological change, and
3. changes in the work force (Blocker, 1965).

Changes in technology have resulted in a shortage of workers in health science, science, and engineering. Other changes in the work force involve increases in service professions--finance, government, insurance--and an increase in the employment of women (Blocker, 1965). Another important trend is the migration of people. Nationally, there

has been a general rural-to-urban shift. The predominant concern with this rapid change is:

> The individual loses to a large extent a psychological referent necessary for personal security. He becomes isolated in a mechanistic environment which severely limits the integrity of his individual personality and his worth as an individual (Blocker, 1965).

Kimbrough attends to the potential changes in power structures. These changes, he says, are most likely during periods of accelerated social evolution. Emerging power clusters can be effective; they can represent a concerted effort to affect the social and economic direction of most institutions. Knowledgeable leaders will be attuned to the emergence of these new power groups and the potential forces for change upon their institutions (Kimbrough, 1964).

The local district, College of the Mainland, has been subject to all of the societal trends mentioned. There has been rapid growth in population; there has been a change in the work force, from agricultural to technical. There are, however, no known investigations concerning the impact of rapid social change on this community. What are, for example, the traditional attitudes? Which attitudes are waning, which are evolving? Is the leadership of the community changing?

It has been shown that there are a variety of beliefs in the community; we have seen how power is structured (typology) in the community. There are, however, the contents of larger societal trends which are mostly unmapped. The need for continual community analysis and interpretation is paramount because the primary charge for the two-year college is that it must be related to the community it serves.

College-community relationships. Blocker, Plummer, and Richardson treat five elements in the community which call for sound relationships

with the college. They may provide strong support for the college. They are:

1. parents
2. public schools
3. the university
4. labor
5. business and industry

These elements in the community must be tended to in the college's public relations (P-R) plan. Parents want to feel that the college is not causing their children to reject parental teachings. Public schools should be primary targets in the P-R plan, especially the counselors who aid students in selecting high education. Many times the roles of the public school and the college are competitive and ill-defined. Of the five community elements, parents and public schools are the most challenging to the public relations program (Blocker, 1965).

Another factor involved in the college-community relationships is the newness of the two-year school as a public institution. Complicating the fact is the great variety of two-year schools. Some of them are: private junior colleges, public junior colleges, public community colleges, technical institutes, extension centers, branch colleges. "There is no single image of the two-year college" (Blocker, 1965). There is little wonder the community gets confused.

Many colleges seek advice from the community; this builds in an automatic relationship. According to one source:

> In the future, the interdependence of an institution and its various publics can only grow, creating the need for valid lines of communication. Certainly, it is sound psychology to ask people how they feel about something before doing it to them, or for them (Welsh, 1965).

Mowhawk College (Ontario) has an advisory committee for every program and involves over 230 citizens in the direction of the college. It stands to reason that whenever possible, influentials of the community should be involved in the advisory function.

Blocker (1965) suggests that influentials may have only peripheral interest in the educational process. The resulting power vacuum can be overcome to the educational institution's advantage. By mobilizing potential influence groups, that is. small but powerful special interests groups, and expanded and strengthened base can be built to support the community college. Educators, he feels, should not be defeated by the power blocks of the community. rather, they should mobilize latent power sources to support the missions of the professional educators.

Streloff writes that a community college public relations program should have two objectives:

1. to further the public understanding of education
2. to give the college authorities information about public opinion so the educational function can improve.

To accomplish these tasks, he suggests:

1. a citizens advisory council
2. establishing priorities among various "publics", i.e., professionals in the field of communication, high school faculties, special interests groups, community leaders
3. gathering facts about community opinion
4. advertising the college's goals
5. determing the main points of misunderstanding and misinformation among the public
6. determing changes that should be made in college policy and programs as a result of justifiable public opinion (Streloff, 1961).

Application of Community Power Analysis and Community Analysis at College of the Mainland

At this time, there are no studies of community power structure or of community attitudes in the College of the Mainland district; perhaps the best reason for this is that there have been no resources for underwriting such a project. The college district is socially complex, being made up of five independent school districts which are mostly different small communities; such an analysis, therefore, certainly would require the skills of a professional. To the knowledge of the writers, College of the Mainland, until the seventh year of its existence, has not had a written public relations plan. The orientation has been toward public information alone. According to Mary Danaczko, Public Information Officer, between July 16, 1973, and June 19, 1974, a total of 339 releases were issued using the following media:

1. daily newspapers
2. radio stations
3. weekly newspapers
4. TV stations
5. company publications
6. high school publications
7. college publications
8. national publications
9. AP and UPI (Danaczko, 1974).

Selectivity is used in the type of media to which releases are sent; not all releases are sent to all sources. There has not been an identification of the various publics of the college for public information use. There is a computerized mailing list in which various social and political groups are identified; the public information office does

not make selective use of this list.

At the present time, the public information office concentrates its releases on the following themes:

1. high academic quality of the school,
2. fun school,
3. personalized attention to students,
4. high quality of the fine arts program, and
5. top staff.

Selection of these themes was made by the public information officer; the selection was based on feelings of the administrative staff about the community's attitude toward the college and what this group discovered from a committee on recruitment; five students were members.

The student recruitment program is part of a public information program. The 1973 Self-study report of the college reported student recruitment to consist of:

1. visits to COM by high school students,
2. visits of Student Personnel Services staff to area high schools,
3. mailing of college catalogs and materials, and
4. participation in career days in high schools.

Plans are now underway to expand and intensify the student recruitment program.

There has been considerable citizen involvement and this is growing; there are several viable advisory committees (Cooperative Education, Community Education, Community Theatre, etc.). The president of the college meets monthly with principals of the district high schools.

Although there has not been a systematic tending to the important social and political elements of the community, there is, among many on the staff, an increasing appreciation for public relations and image creation. One source says it very well.

> What are the general images of the two-year school held by the faculty and students and by those in the community? How do these perceptions effect the functioning of the college (Blocker, 1965)?

The 1973 Self-study Report of the college called for a development of

> a systematic public relations program which begins with the public's imperfect perceptions of the institution and. . . a program to relate accurate information to the public (Self-study, 1973).

Other recommendations from the report were that

> a comprehensive plan for the curricular offerings should be developed after a thorough study of community needs. Optional use of lay advisory committees in curriculum development and in course revision would be one useful vehicle for long-range planning.

and

> A study should be made of community reactions and attitudes to the similar courses offered by Continuing Education and the Academic and Technical-vocational divisions to determine whether the community considers them only similar courses or duplicate courses for less money.

To this point the writers have dealt with community power structure theory and the college's application of that theory to its public information program. It is now time to look at the five perceptions that this study will attempt to measure. The reader should remember that the perceptions dealt with racial, religious, and political concepts; two perceptions dealt with the kind and quality of the college program. It is appropriate, now, to develop the environment in which such perceptions may have been nurtured.

Background on each Perception

The perception that COM has an excessively black representation could have arisen from the founding of the college. In 1967 it was temporarily (3 years) housed in a defunct all-black high school, the Booker T. Washington campus. Also, there is a record of great support in the black precincts for both college bond issues. Furthermore, because of the lack of recreational facilities in black areas of the city there are many black students who remain on campus much of the day. They use the College Center and the Physical Education Center. Actually, the black representation at the college is in proportion to the black population in the community.

The perception of the school as being excessively liberal in institutional philosophy and faculty values may have its genesis in the Prospectus of the college. This cornerstone document promotes an open, humanistic philosophy and it is used in recruitment of college staff. The college also tries for wide geographical recruitment of faculty; few faculty are local "insiders" or from the East Texas conservative base. In addition, the college has spent, at one time, approximately $2,000 for the education of each full-time student. The campus (120 acres) and its facilities cost over $10,000,000, accommodating about 1,600-2,000 credit students. The architectural design is very contemporary and is different from other local buildings.

The perception concerning religion and atheism may have come from some objections made about some instructional methods and materials used. For example, the film Woodstock drew objection when it was shown in class--because of nudity. The visit of a working prostitute to a social problems class also drew objection. The faculty, by

and large, is not of the traditional East Texas Baptist persuasion. Another significant fact is that the college leaders have tried to keep the church-state separation distinct. The local ministerial alliance has frequently been prevented from sponsoring religious activities at the college.

The fourth perception of the college as a trade school--may be traced to past public information emphasis on vocational programs.

Finally, the image of "easiness" may originate in the college's use of behaviorally specified objectives, student contracts, and non-punitive grading. This may offend the local puritan ethic which insists that education must be hard and painful. If learning is not oppressive, then it is not any good.

These perceptions have existed for some time. They have been gathered periodically from students at registration time, from complaints to the board, from the public information office, and from community contacts.

Statement of Significance

There are several areas where this study can be of value.

First of all, the perceptions have never been validated. The staff may forget them and the accompanying anguish if they are not valid. If the perceptions, or some of them, are valid, then the college staff can begin attacking the problem.

Finally, given the validity of this public image, the college can discover what groups it is not serving and the reason for it. It is important to know that the study is not one to discover a truth; that is whether or not the college is a trade school is not the issue.

The issue is whether the public perceives it is a trade school.

The writers feel that the community perceptions of the college must be discovered, validated, and shaped. There is probably no more immediate or significant need in the institution.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

The study was designed to test two main hypotheses. The first hypothesis was designed to discover whether or not five test attitudes or perceptions were present in the two populations.

The two populations were:

Group X - high school graduates who intend to enroll in higher education, but not necessarily College of the Mainland (COM).

Group Y - students who have attended COM for three semesters (i.e., second semester sophomores).

Support for individual hypotheses meant that over fifty percent of the population affirmed the hypothesis. Actual degrees of support or rejection were shown in percentages. Additionally, the mean was calculated for each response. There were four possible responses for each perception; the range of response was from full support to full rejection. A mean value of 2.5 represented a neutral response.

This aspect of the study can be hypothetically formulated as follows:

HSX = There does in fact exist more than 50% support for the perceptions tested in the X group.

HSY = There does in fact exist more than 50% support for the perceptions tested in the Y group.

HSX_0 = There is less than 50% support for the perceptions tested in the X group.

HSY_0 = There is less than 50% support for the perceptions tested in the Y group.

Again this part of the study will present percentages of sup-

port and mean values for the responses; in this part there was no testing of significance.

It was not possible in this intermediate study to test the very critical question of whether or not the experience had at College of the Mainland over three semesters changed attitudes on the perceptions tested. To do this properly, there needed to be a two year study pre-testing and post-testing of the group passing through the College of the Mainland experience. This will be treated in recommendation number 1 (see page 30).

The second part of this study attempted to determine the persistence of attitudes on the five perceptions tested even though there was no pre- and post- testing of a population. This was done in a projective manner by assessing correlation information between the groups actually tested in this study.

There was an attempt made to assess whether there was a relationship between the manner of responding to the perceptions tested in the X group and the manner of responding to the perceptions in the Y group. This was an attempt to answer whether the manners of responding varied together positively or negatively. This was reported in a description of the magnitude of the relationship, and the direction of the relationship (positive or negative). Also, there were tests of significance run on the relationships to determine if there was true relation (and thus some measure of predicitability) or correlation due to sampling error (no possibility of any predictability).

This aspect of the study can be stated in hypothetical form:

HC = There does in fact exist a relationship in the mode of response to the questions on the perceptions which is

greater than sampling error and which would allow some conclusions of predictability.

HC_o = There does not in fact exist a relationship in the mode of response to the questions on the preceptions which is greater than sampling error and thus there can be no inference of predictability.

The questionnaire was designed to obtain respondent attitudes on the five perceptions about College of the Mainland. The instrument was composed of 29 items. The questions were constructed according to the design regulations of Quinn McNemar (1962). They were refined and distributed on the questionnaire in a random manner so as not to have any one set of attitude questions fall together and allow bias to form on the later questions on that attitude. The questions were formed from sub-hypotheses on the major attitude to be tested. They were stated in a positive form. The statements are found on Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 (See Appendix 3). On the questionnaire, however, the sub-hypotheses were divided equally between positive and negative statements. The negatively stated questions were returned to their positive form and the coding for computation also adjusted for analysis. The questions were administered to both populations under the heading, "General Opinion Questionnaire." The manner of responding was explained. A plea was included in the directions to be very honest. The questionnaires were in no way signed or identifiable.

The X group consisted of 53 high school seniors who were going on to post-secondary education, but not necessarily to College of the Mainland. The seniors were from the five district high schools which comprise the College of the Mainland district. The Y group consisted of 53 students at College of the Mainland who had completed at least

three semesters at College of the Mainland. The number in the Y group was also 53.

There were many more questionnairs which were obviously not taken seriously by the respondents were eliminated. Also eliminated were questionnaires covered with comments about the type of questions asked or questionnaires left incomplete. After this elimination and further statistical selection the final samples were considered as accurate as could be obtained and both had n=53. The number of questionnaires selected was considered adequate to the study because of the manner of selected and the fact that the selection of the Y group did in fact represent about 11% of the population from which the Y group could have been drawn.

The questionnaires were then coded and processed according to IBM subroutines (IBM, 1968) and function subprograms CORRE, Input subroutine DATA, CANOR, MINV, NROOT, and EIGEN. This method complies with procedures outlined in W. W. Cooley and P. R. Lohnes (1962).

The results are reported according to the two distinct hypothesis situations set up for the study. The results are contained in tables 1 (for HSX and HSY) and 2 (for HC). The more detailed reporting of the mean response on each of the sub-hypotheses on tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

The results reported on table 1 indicate that both hypotheses HSX and HSY are found to be supported by their definition and thus HSX_o and HSY_o, the null in these cases, are to be rejected.

Again the supported hypotheses are:

HSX - There does in fact exist more than 50% support for the perceptions tested in the X group.

HSY - There does in fact exist more than 50% support for the perceptions tested in the Y.

The support for the hypotheses in the X group vary from a high of 84.45% to a low of 56.18%. The support for the hypotheses in the Y group vary from a high of 83.02% to a low of 57.41%. This aspect of the findings are descriptive in nature and indicate support for all five hypotheses in both the X and Y groups to varying degrees as seen in Table 1.

PERCEPTION TESTED	% SUPPORT		MEAN RESPONSE ON SCALE	
	X	Y	X	Y
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND HAS A BLACK ENROLLMENT WHICH IS GREATER THAN THE COMMUNITY PROPORTION.	73.58	57.41	2.79	2.54
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS AN INSTITUTION WITH A LIBERAL PHILOSOPHY AND A FACULTY OF ALMOST UNIVERSALLY LIBERAL OPINION.	56.18	59.26	2.58	2.58
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS OPPOSED TO RELIGION AND POSSIBLY ATHEISTIC IN ITS PHILOSOPHY.	62.12	53.23	2.66	2.56
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS PRIMARILY A TRADE SCHOOL.	84.45	83.02	3.00	2.96
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS EXCESSIVELY EASY IN ITS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS THUS MAKING THEM OF DOUBTFUL QUALITY.	79.23	78.40	2.95	3.01

TABLE I

The results of the testing of hypothesis HC are to be found in Table 2. Here the R values for the X-Y correlations on the respective perceptions are reported with the computed Chi-Squared value and the decision on significance made according to the appropriate degrees of freedom. The results indicate that there were all positive correlations between the profiles tested in the X and Y groups, and that responses to the questions testing each of the five attitudes varied together in a positive manner, but not, however, to a degree which would eliminate the chance that it is due to sampling error. Thus, in this case, the hypothesis HC_0 (the null) is supported.

PERCEPTION TESTED	X - Y CORRELATION	CHI-SQUARED VALUE	SIGNIFICANT
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND HAS A BLACK ENROLLMENT WHICH IS GREATER THAN THE COMMUNITY PROPORTION.	.43	19.78	NO
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS AN INSTITUTION WITH A LIBERAL PHILOSOPHY AND A FACULTY OF ALMOST UNIVERSALLY LIBERAL OPINION.	.51	31.87	NO
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS OPPOSED TO RELIGION AND POSSIBLY ATHEISTIC IN ITS PHILOSOPHY.	.50	30.33	NO
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS PRIMARILY A TRADE SCHOOL.	.63	49.87	NO
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS EXCESSIVELY EASY IN ITS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS THUS MAKING THEM OF DOUBTFUL QUALITY.	.52	37.13	NO

TABLE 2

While only limited inferences of predicitability can be made, there is thus some indication that students coming to the College of the Mainland experience are not so locked into attitudes on these profiles.

In summary, it was found that all five of the perceptions were supported both in the sample of high school seniors from the district schools and by the sample of sophomores at College of the Mainland. The perceptions were not found to be equally supported by either group or when the groups were compared.

It was found that, while the responses varied positively between the X and Y groups, the correlations were not high enough to indicate any substantial possibility for any predictability. A close study of tables 1 through 7 will indicate more detailed information. Tables 3 through 7 are in Appendix 3.

Chapter 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has revealed that there is seventy percent support for three of the five perceptions. In other words, three perceptions were the most strongly established, and the writers will treat only those with recommendations. The three are:

1. College of the Mainland has a black enrollment greater than the community proportion.
2. College of the Mainland is primarily a trade school.
3. College of the Mainland is excessively easy in its instructional programs thus making them of doubtful quality.

Recommendation 1

There should be a comprehensive research study of community attitudes toward the college, a study which would be of statistical significance.

Discussion: Until the Fall of 1973 feedback to the college on these perceptions was sporadic, but the hearsay led faculty and staff to believe these perceptions of the college existed. In the Fall of 1973 the president established an advisory committee on student recruitment. It was made up of the deans and five appointed students. The committee confirmed the previously hearsay perceptions. A public information plan for 1973-74 was developed on the basis of that committee's findings. This study establishes the community perceptions with even more definition.

There now needs to be an in-depth study of community attitudes (and knowledge) toward the college. This study must be designed to probe many different publics. To this date the only groups studied have been college age students. A model study exists; it is The Schools and the Community: A Communications Study. This study was done for the Washington, D.C. public schools.

Recommendation 2

The college should develop a total public-relations (P-R) program to deal with each of the three perceptions.

Discussion: The P-R program should concern itself with the following:

1. Learn the strengths of each sociopolitical position in the community.
2. Analyze the structure and distribution of power in the community.
3. Learn about attitudes which have changed because of large societal trends; which attitudes have not changed?
4. Describe present relations with parents, public schools, the university, labor, and business.
5. Analyze the pluralistic publics' media habits so that the college message may be distributed through the appropriate medium.
6. Develop a profile of the community's organizations and their inter-relationships.
7. Design a program to sample public opinion and knowledge.
8. Develop P-R objectives and subsequent programs of relating activity.

The review of the literature on community-school relations showed a common theme: most often the P-R plan is not stated, or written; most often there is no plan and the school has a reactive public information program. The distinction between public relations and

public information is extremely important. Public relations must involve 1 through 8 above; public information doesn't have to.

Frequent communication instruments were annual reports student publications, circular letters, school facilities, exhibits, tape-slide presentations, motion pictures, billboards, and calendars. Popular news topics may involve the activities of students, faculty, administration, and patrons.

Recommendation 3

Given the college's commitment to minority and disadvantaged students, the college should re-evaluate the way it presents that purpose to the community.

Discussion: This recommendation properly falls into the P-R program within media destribution. The college should take care not to bombard the black community (through their media) with white, Angle-saxon college news topics. Nor, conversely, should it continually present black college news topics to a conservative-reactionary white public. Otherwise, both groups may not be able to participate effectively in the college. It should be pointed out the "Y" group, students who have been in the college for two years, does not have the very strong perception that the college is predominantly "black."

Recommendation 4

Concerning the community and student perception of the college as a trade school--the college leadership should decide if this is a desirable perception or not.

Discussion: This is the strongest perception in the study; 84% of the community sample confirms the trade school concept and 83% of the two-year students. There is almost no change. If this perception is undesirable then the recommendation is transfered to the public relations arena. Enrollment figures must be given to the community and students; campus tours must include academic and continuing education areas as well as technical-vocational. It is more difficult to observe a philosophy class or literacy training than a welding class. There is more to "see" in technical-vocational areas.

There is some indication that if the community attitude about "trade" were changed, there would be a corresponding change in the two-year student attitude. The evidence for this statement is shown on Table 2, page 28.

The "trade" perception has the highest correlation value in the study. Although the value is not sufficiently significant to predict, the trade school profile indicates that a change effected in X (community group) would indeed effect a change in Y (student group).

Recommendation 5

There should be further research into the perception of easy (quality).

Discussion: The instructional system used in the college employs every effort to take mystery and guesswork out of teaching and learning. Students contract for grades and, if they fulfill the contract, they receive the grade. There is an emphasis placed on planning and the extensive use of technology and learning resources. It is possible that this approach is interpreted as "easy."

A further interpretation is that residents of the College of the Mainland district subscribe to the protestant work ethic. The instructional system used at College of the Mainland allows greater learning with less effort than most traditional systems. Such an arrangement would likely not be valued by people with the convictions mentioned above.

A third explanation of the findings regarding "easy" is that College of the Mainland's instructional program has not yet reached a maximum degree of effectiveness. In the spring, 1974, two task forces were created in response to staff concerns about the quality of instruction. One task force, The Task Force on Curriculum Effectiveness, made the recommendations found in Appendix 4. The second concerned itself with the preparation of higher level objectives. The outcome of the work of the second group is that there will be greater emphasis on including higher level objectives in instructional programs and on training staff to write them.

The Self-study Report also contains several recommendations for the improvement of instruction:

> An evaluation of the grading system is in order. Greater efforts must be made towards clarifying, refining, and communicating the intent and mechanics of the grading system.
>
> Some programs in the Technical-Vocational area lack courses needed for students to become educated to their full citizenship capacities.
>
> The faculty, staff, and students should be offered expertise in the design, evaluating, and development of a systems approach to learning.
>
> A method of monitoring student achievement at the end of the semester by the use of outside achievement measures needs to be provided.

> All faculty members should have on file with their Division Chairmen a continuing program of experimentation, innovation, and evaluation to be periodically reviewed.
>
> A regular program of interaction should be set up on an interdisciplinary basis to assist and inform instructors of common problems.
>
> More in-service training programs should be established to help develop and evaluate courses.
>
> Professional assistance from all divisions should be used to regulate evaluation schemes campus-wide on teachers, grading, documents, experiments, and the like (Self-study, 1973).

This recommendation may involve the theory of cognitive dissonance. When there is dissonance, pressure is developed to reduce that dissonance (Insko, 1967). This theory lends credence to the recommendation that there should be further research into the perception of "easy school." It stands to reason that most students do not want to be associated with a school of poor quality. The data gathered here shows that high school seniors tend to consider College of the Mainland to be an "easy" school. Students who choose to attend College of the Mainland in spite of the prevailing public opinion would be in a state of dissonance. There would be pressure to reduce the dissonance by convincing themselves that College of the Mainland is not, in fact, easy. The data gathered here does not show that has happened. Do the facts outweigh the pressure to reduce dissonance? Or, does the dissonance theory not apply here?

Recommendation 6

The college should develop a comprehensive program of instructional improvement.

Discussion: Work on this has already begun with the creation of task

forces on curriculum entry criteria, higher level objectives, and general studies. There needs to be strong leadership in developing higher level, creative, self-discovery activities, a curriculum which challenges the better student.

Evaluation services and techniques must be applied equally to all areas of instruction: academic, continuing education, and technical-vocational. A program of instructional improvement might also consider more flexible course designs and the creation of learning environments outside of the classroom, in the community.

Recommendation 7

The college should apply the resources of the $550,000 grant from Title III, AIDP (Advanced Institutional Development Program), to work on Recommendations 1, 2, 5, and 6.

Discussion: The study is a ready source of information on some problems within the college. The study provides a theoretical base, a discussion of the background and significance, a measurement of the problem, and a recommendation for solutions.

The use of these findings and recommendations would appear to be an effective and efficient way to employ some of the grant resources.

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APPENDIX 1

Selected Statements of Operational Beliefs of Leaders

(Nunnery, 1971)

INTERDEPENDENT BELIEFS	MODERATE BELIEFS	INDIVIDUALISTIC BELIEFS
The needs of the county must be met regardless of indebtedness or taxation involved.	The government should not run deficits in operational expenses; however, deficits should be incurred in order to pay for vital services, such as schools, even in times economic difficulty.	The best financial policy is to spend what funds are available and then stop when they are depleted.
To limit the activities of government to the funds available rather than have spending on actual needs is absurd.		
Social legislation and charitable procedures are clear-cut and definite functions of government through which a more stable and secure society can be achieved.	We may as well accept the fact that we have a trend toward "socialism" in this country and nothing can be done about it.	Federal government policy of sharing wealth through social welfare legislative programs is an encroachment upon the freedom of man.
The direct involvement of the federal governmental agencies, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, in local affairs will mean progress toward desirable economic and social reform.	There is a danger in too much federal control over the action taken by local governmental units in such things as education.	The federal government should directly affect the lives of local residents only through the rigid application of absolute principles of laws.
Man needs some assurance of economic security if he is to become a stable member of society.	We are obligated to take care of the aged and otherwise unfortunate people through government charity.	The essential task facing each person is responsibility for his own livelihood and social well-being.

APPENDIX 2

Sociopolitical Positions: Implications for the Two-year College

(Blocker, 1965)

	RADICAL	LIBERAL	CONSERVATIVE	REACTIONARY
Attitude toward change	Rapid change	General change	Maintenance of status quo	Regression to the past
Attitude toward governmental action	Highly centralized	Centralized for specialized and necessary services	Decentralized essential services for selective groups	Laissez faire
Implications for education	Educational programs for social reconstruction	Educational programs for gradual change	Educational programs for preservation of the culture	Educational programs for preservation of absolute values
	Directed curriculum for social objectives	Curriculum adapted to current problems and needs	Curriculum centered upon traditional subject matter	Curriculum limited to immutable truths
	Selection of students for social purposes	Self-selection of students	Selection of students on academic basis	Selection of students on academic, social, and economic basis

COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND HAS A BLACK ENROLLMENT WHICH IS GREATER THAN THE COMMUNITY PROPORTION.

	MEAN RESPONSE ON QUESTION X	Y
THERE ARE MORE BLACK STUDENTS AT COM THAN THE PROPORTION IN MY HIGH SCHOOL CLASS.	2.57	1.99
THE PROPORTION OF BLACK STUDENTS IS GREATER THAN WHITE STUDENTS AT COM.	2.79	2.43
THERE ARE MORE BLACK STUDENTS THAN WHITE STUDENTS AT COM.	2.89	2.87
I HAVE HEARD COM REFERRED TO AS BLACK UNIVERSITY, BLACK COLLEGE OR SOME OTHER NAMES LIKE THESE.	2.78	2.66
I HAVE HEARD MY PARENTS AND THEIR FRIENDS TALK ABOUT THE LARGE NUMBER OF BLACK AT COM.	2.87	2.83

TABLE 3

COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS AN INSTITUTION WITH A LIBERAL PHILOSOPHY AND A FACULTY OF ALMOST UNIVERSALLY LIBERAL OPINION.

	MEAN RESPONSE ON QUESTION X	Y
THE BUILDINGS AT COM ARE TOO EXPENSIVE AND IMPRACTICAL FOR A COLLEGE.	3.28	3.43
STUDENTS AT COM ARE ALLOWED TO DO WHATEVER THEY WANT TO DO.	2.66	2.89
THE WAY TEACHERS LOOK AND ACT AT COM WOULD LEAD YOU TO BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE IN NO WAY OLD FASHIONED.	1.89	1.73
THE TEACHERS AT COM ARE NOT VERY PATRIOTIC.	2.53	2.53
THINGS I HAVE HEARD AND READ ABOUT COM WOULD LEAD ME TO BELIEVE THAT COM IS MORE LIBERAL THAN THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY.	2.25	2.43
COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND SPENDS TOO MUCH MONEY ON ITS STUDENTS.	2.83	2.72

TABLE 4

COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS OPPOSED TO RELIGION AND POSSIBLY ATHEISTIC IN ITS PHILOSOPHY.

	MEAN RESPONSE ON QUESTION X	Y
COM IS RELIGIOUS	2.08	1.67
I HAVE HEARD PEOPLE SAY THAT THERE SHOULD BE MORE RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY ON COM'S CAMPUS.	3.08	3.09
COURSES AT COM LEAVE OUT RELIGION TOO MUCH.	2.96	3.06
YOU WILL SELDOM SEE A COM TEACHER IN CHURCH.	3.13	2.75
COM IS NOT RELIGIOUS ENOUGH.	2.83	2.90
AFTER COMPLETING COURSES AT COM A STUDENT WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE MORE RELIGIOUS.	1.92	1.81

TABLE 5

COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS PRIMARILY A TRADE SCHOOL.

	MEAN RESPONSE ON QUESTION X	Y
COM IS A GOOD PREPARATION FOR A JOB BUT NOT FOR A FOUR YEAR SCHOOL	2.85	2.85
COM'S ACADEMIC COURSES DON'T TRANSFER.	3.19	3.14
COM IS MORE A TRADE SCHOOL THAN AN ACADEMIC SCHOOL.	2.93	2.76
ONLY STUDENTS WHO WANT JOB TRAINING GO TO COM.	3.26	3.07
I CAN NOT GET AS GOOD AN EDUCATION AT COM AS I COULD IN THE FIRST 2 YEARS OF A FOUR YEAR COLLEGE.	2.89	3.02
THE ACADEMIC COURSES AT COM ARE NOT AS GOOD AS THOSE THAT TRAIN YOU FOR A JOB.	2.85	2.89

TABLE 6

COLLEGE OF THE MAINLAND IS EXCESSIVELY EASY IN ITS INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS THUS MAKING THEM OF DOUBTFUL QUALITY.

	MEAN RESPONSE ON QUESTION X	Y
ONLY STUDENTS WHO CAN'T MAKE IT AT A FOUR YEAR COLLEGE TO TO COM.	3.36	3.43
COM IS NOT AS DIFFICULT A COLLEGE AS OTHER PLACES I COULD GO.	2.35	2.52
YOU CAN NOT FAIL AT COM.	2.96	2.92
STUDENTS AT COM DO NOT HAVE TO STUDY VERY MUCH TIME TO LEARN.	2.71	2.55
KINDERGARTEN U. IS A GOOD WAY TO DESCRIBE COM'S COURSES.	3.13	3.20
COURSES AT COM ARE SO EASY THEY AREN'T VERY GOOD.	3.25	3.13

TABLE 7

APPENDIX 4

Further Recommendations

1. Course documents need to be revised so that reference criteria for grades will be based on quality instead of/or as well as quality. This may mean the introduction of more subjectivity into grading policies. More subjectivity is not necessarily inconsistent with the concept of sound behavioral objectives. In support of this assumption, the course planning manual states: "What minimum standard or degree of accuracy should be assigned to each task (if appropriate)?"

2. In order for the faculty to develop better quality documents, there is a need for a good deal of in-service training. This may be achieved through the use of consultants, structured faculty exchange or other means. However, the faculty definitely needs help.

3. There needs to be a sharpening up of the entire diagnosis and advisement system. Exit and entry criteria for each course need to be very closely adhered to, a condition that does not now presently exist. At the same time, two factors should be kept in mind: (a) Entry criteria for each course will and <u>should</u> vary from course to course; (b) There should be some sort of diagnostic instrument or procedure that allows an "escape hatch" for capable students who simply are not good at taking diagnostic tests.

4. Consideration should be given to the institution of a "General Studies Diploma" for students who cannot become capable of achieving most college parallel courses. The emphasis here would be on "process oriented" courses.

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